



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 31, 2007

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MIDLAND SECRETARY SENTENCED ON MAIL FRAUD CHARGE

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced today that 47 year old Martha Jan Russell, of Midland, Texas, was sentenced today to 19 months in federal prison after pleading guilty to mail fraud. She was sentenced by United States District Judge Robert Junell who also ordered her to pay \$166,000 in restitution to her former employer.

Beginning in March 2002, and continuing until approximately July 2006, Ms. Russell devised and carried out a scheme to defraud her employer, Clayton Williams Energy (CWI). She caused company checks, without authorization, to be issued to pay personal and family expenses. As part of the scheme, Ms. Russell would periodically submit "donation requests" to superiors at CWI which bore the forged initials of the CWI Chief Executive Officer, indicating, falsely and the materially, that the CEO had authorized CWI to make the donations.

These donations in some circumstances went to entities, such as Midland Rocket Fastpitch, Midland High School Baseball, and Midland High School Softball, in which Ms. Russell and/or a member of her immediate family had a personal interest. In other cases, the "donations" were in reality used to pay incurred tuition and other expenses for a family member at Angelo State University. Still other times, the check was issued to an entity such as Midland Rocket Fastpitch, but Ms. Russell would forge an endorsement of a representative of the payee entity and use the proceeds of the check to pay personal expenses. During the time period of the scheme, Ms. Russell embezzled approximately \$57,000 from CWI in this manner.

The defendant also would submit invoices that would cause CWI to reimburse her for travel expenses that she never incurred for the company, and in doing so she would falsely represent that she had in fact traveled to various places on CWI business. During the time period of the scheme she embezzled approximately \$87,000 from CWI in this manner.

This case was investigated by the Texas Rangers and is being prosecuted for the government by Assistant United States Attorney John Klassen.

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